

entertain up to 15 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

VA ACCOUNTABILITY

(Mr. BOEHNER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BOEHNER. My colleagues, next week marks the 1-year anniversary since General Eric Shinseki resigned as the Secretary of the Veterans Affairs Department.

At the time, the President promised reform. He said: "The number one priority is making sure that problems get fixed."

Instead of a new day at the VA, the American people are still seeing more of the same. Last year, Congress gave the VA Secretary new authority to fire employees. While some 110 VA facilities kept secret lists to hide their wait times, just one person has been fired—one.

What the hell happened to the rest of them? Some got to retire with their benefits, some got transfers, some got paid leave, some got a slap on the wrist. All of them went on collecting checks from taxpayers. If only the Veterans Administration did half as good a job of taking care of our veterans as they do the bureaucrats, we would be in a lot better shape.

Congress also gave the VA more than \$16 billion to improve care and to shorten waiting times, yet the number of patients facing long waits is about the same. The number of patients waiting more than 90 days has doubled. At this point, the VA can't even build a hospital. Just about every project ends up years behind schedule and hundreds of millions, if not billions, over cost.

Last week, the public learned that the VA is spending \$6 billion a year illegally. An internal report exposed examples of overspending on conferences, improper gifts, inappropriate purchases, and promotional items—again, if only VA bureaucrats did as good a job taking care of our veterans as they do themselves.

The author of the report at the VA wrote, "doors are swung wide open for fraud, waste, and abuse," and that these actions "may potentially result in serious harm or death to America's veterans."

That is their own expert saying this.

This isn't run-of-the-mill incompetence. It is arrogance; and it is arrogance that allows our veterans to be lied to, ignored, and, frankly, left to die.

My colleagues, it is almost Memorial Day. This is when we slow down and reflect on the debt of gratitude that we owe to our heroes.

I commend Chairman MILLER and all of the members of the Veterans Affairs' Committee for striving every day to fulfill this obligation. Congress will continue to pass legislation to hold the VA accountable, but only the adminis-

tration can change the culture from within.

The President owes the American people a real, long-term plan to fix the VA—not a promise, not a pledge, not rearranging the chairs on a deck—a real plan to clean up this mess.

I will keep coming back to this podium until the administration produces such a plan.

VOLVO OCEAN RACE

(Mr. CICILLINE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the city of Newport, Rhode Island, in my district, on hosting, this month, the Volvo Ocean Race, the world's premier sailing race around the world.

This 12-day event brought 125,000 visitors to Rhode Island, far exceeding even the most optimistic projections, as well as millions of dollars in economic activity that supported Rhode Island's tourism industry and our small-business community. Most importantly, the success of this event offered an opportunity to tell our story about the great things that are happening in Rhode Island today.

I want to thank everyone who helped make the only North American stop-over for this year's Volvo Ocean Race such an incredible success, including Sail Newport, Rhode Island's Public Sailing Center, Discover Newport, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, the Newport Chamber of Commerce, Senate President Teresa Paiva-Weed, Speaker Mattiello, members of the general assembly, and Governor Gina Raimondo.

I want to especially acknowledge Senator WHITEHOUSE for all of his work to bring this race to Rhode Island and his ongoing efforts to enhance our State's position in the maritime industry.

Congratulations to everyone who made this such a success.

TRIBUTE TO STAFF SERGEANT ROBERT H. DIETZ

(Mr. GIBSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GIBSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Staff Sergeant Robert H. Dietz who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his courageous actions during World War II. Sergeant Dietz hailed from Kingston, New York, a proud and historical city in New York's 19th Congressional District.

In March 1945, Sergeant Dietz led his squad on an attack of a heavily fortified German position. Under heavy machine gun fire, Sergeant Dietz advanced forward, clearing enemy obstacles, providing a path for the men of his squad and platoon. This selfless act enabled the success of this attack; but in the process, Sergeant Dietz lost his life.

With strong local support, we submitted a bill to rename the post office in Kingston for Sergeant Dietz. Yesterday that bill passed in the Oversight and Government Reform Committee. I thank Chairman CHAFFETZ, his committee, and the entire New York delegation for their strong support; and I look forward to its passage in the full House soon.

Mr. Speaker, as we approach Memorial Day weekend, we pause to remember Sergeant Dietz and all those men and women who lost their lives in defense of our freedoms.

BRING BACK OUR GIRLS

(Ms. WILSON of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, today I, along with many of my colleagues—both women and men, Republicans and Democrats—wear red to pressure Nigerian President-elect Muhammadu Buhari into taking aggressive action against Boko Haram.

Next week, as Nigeria welcomes the new President and celebrates Democracy Day, we here in Congress want to put a spotlight on the immense threat Boko Haram poses to Nigeria's democracy and freedom.

Mr. Speaker, we want President-elect Buhari to know we will hold him accountable, just as we held his predecessor accountable. We urge this new administration to bring with it a swift and lasting change in attitude on this issue. We hope the new President will have a sense of urgency in finding the Chibok schoolgirls and defeating Boko Haram.

Mr. Speaker, we expect the new President to find the girls, whether they have been married off against their will or not, are alive or in a mass grave. Wherever they are, we want to know.

Until they are found, we will continue to tweet, tweet, tweet #bringbackourgirls; tweet, tweet, tweet #joinrepwilson.

21ST CENTURY CURES ACT

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the 21st Century Cures Act. This is legislation that we, at the Energy and Commerce Committee, are working on in a bipartisan basis, and we look forward to moving it to the House floor and seeing this passed and signed into law. Why are we doing it? Because we want to put the focus on cures, real cures that will enable people to live better lives.

Let's take just one disease, Alzheimer's. There are 5 million Americans that currently have Alzheimer's. The cost to the Nation is \$215 billion a year. When you look out several decades to 2050, the cost is estimated to be